



EN 6933/4933

Survey of Contemporary Fiction:

*Postsouthern Turns*

Fall 2011

M.W. 2:00-3:15 p.m.

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In 1980, Lewis P. Simpson's "The Closure of History in a Postsouthern America" identified a trend in which "[t]he history of the literary mind of the South seeking to become aware of itself" seemed no longer functional. It was, for Simpson, the end of an era: "The Southern Renaissance will not come again," he wrote in a mournful tone of finality.

Simpson's charting of a postsouthern turn in literature of the U.S. South laid the groundwork for critical interrogations of terms used to define a discipline made possible, in large measure, by the Renaissance as a literary-critical formation – not least the very concepts of "the South" and "southern literature." Fueled by theories and practices of postmodernism and, more recently, the emergence of a new southern studies, critics have advanced lines of critical inquiry aimed at rethinking, in the words of Edward L. Ayers, "what we talk about when we talk about the South."

In this course, we will begin by drawing from relevant scholarship in southern studies to establish a critical framework for studying selected works of fiction that will take us on postsouthern turns. Along the way, we will consider these and other key questions: How do contemporary writers represent the U.S. South in response to literary, historical, and cultural elements traditionally used to define the region under the auspices of southern exceptionalism? How do contemporary writers (re)imagine southern spaces and places and the people who inhabit them? How do postsouthern turns in contemporary fiction represent historical figures, events, and narratives in the context of postmodern skepticism about "master narratives"? How are globalization and, more specifically, the transnational turn in literary studies surfacing in and shaping understanding of representations of the U.S. South in contemporary fiction?

*Texts:*

Percy, *The Moviegoer* (1961)

Walker, *Meridian* (1976)

Douglas, *Can't Quit You, Baby* (1989)

Humphreys, *Rich in Love* (1992)

Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1992)

Bell, *Devil's Dream* (2009)

Eggers, *Zeitoun* (2009)

Selected works of short fiction